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for cabinet-work, from which slabs for tables five or six feet in diameter are cut, one of which, of rare beauty, we have ourselves seen. Coffee, indigo, cotton, and pepper grow, but are neglected, as is cinnamon. But the island is almost wholly destitute of the necessaries of life. The Dutch have always kept down ordinary agriculture, and forced the people to depend on their commerce for support. Rice is a great article of food, and this is supplied by Java, Celebes, and Bengal. Yams grow in great abundance, and are an extensively-used article of food. But the best resource of the islanders is the sago, or Papua bread. This is the pith of a palm, the humblest, the nipa excepted, of its tribe. It furnishes the principal food of the people, its delicate flour being baked into cakes. This is its native country—that is, in the region between Borneo on the one side, and New Guinea on the other. The quantity of pith from a single tree is immense, often as much as 600 pounds. The refuse left in heaps produces excellent mushrooms. The epicures of Molucca even eat certain white worms generated in the same refuse.

One palm-tree on this island produces a poison, used to poison water, in the early days of the Dutch, by the natives. They now make an intoxicating drink from it. The betel nut, tobacco, and the wild banana, are also found. It is singular that all these things are consumed on the spot, while the spices are utterly neglected. They send all away, without ever using them at all themselves. Teak is a tree much used, as also ginger.

Deer and hogs are the chief animals, the island being poor in quadrupeds. But birds swarm in the forests, in every variety of plumage—purple, bright blue, gold, green, and gaudy crimson. The edible birds'-nests are found here and exported to China with tressang, sharks'-fins, and small parcels of gold. To the same country they also send birds of Paradise (variously called Birds of God, Birds of the Sun, and King Birds). There is also a trade in feathers.

The people are of middle size, military in their character, very impetuous, but easily appeased. They were represented by the Dutch, who behaved to them with savage cruelty, as a ferocious race without any merciful ideas. They are now, however, a quiet race. They must have been a simple people when discovered, as they boiled their food in a hollow bamboo. They now use iron pans from China.

The island is celebrated in the history of Indian colonisation as the scene of a fearful execution by the Dutch of Captain Towerson and nine other Englishmen, nine Japanese and one Portuguese, known as the Massacre of Amboyna.

RELIGION AND ARTS OF THE ASSYRIANS.

It has been remarked in a former article on Nineveh,* that the character of the Assyrians was eminently religious, though their veneration was falsely directed, and took a superstitious and debasing form. There are some lofty conceptions, however, in their sculptured embodiments of the power and majesty of God; and something of the religious philosophy of the Chaldeans and Egyptians must have been known to their priests. But in speaking of them as a people, it is their public worship and the popular creed that we must notice, rather than the abstractions which the priesthood conserved for their own order. In all countries, the sun appears to have been the earliest object of religious adoration; but, except among the Persians, popular ignorance and superstition personified this glorious symbol of divine power and beneficence, and hence Baal, or Belus, Crishna, Osiris, Apollo, etc. Baal was the supreme divinity of the Assyrians and Babylonians, and probably of the Phœnicians also, and as such is represented on a cylinder of green feldspar found by Mr. Layard at Kouyunjik, and supposed by him to have been the signet or amulet of Sennacherib.

On many of the Assyrian bas-reliefs, and other antique remains of the same country and period, an object is represented called a sacred tree, one of the forms of which is represented in the annexed engraving (p. 284). On the cylinder in question, the flowers or fruit of the tree are in the form of an acorn, and the king stands on one side, and a figure, described as a eunuch, on the other. The king holds up his right hand in an attitude of adoration, and in his left is the sacrificial mace. Above the sacred tree is the figure of Baal, the body of the god in a circle, the symbol of eternity, above which are the three heads of Baal (an unusual mode of representing that deity), while from the sides spread the wings, and from below the tail and legs of a dove, typical of Mylitta, the Assyrian Venus. Among the sculptures excavated at Nimroud were several figures of Dagon, the fish-god of the Phœnicians, from which we learn that, in accordance with that intercommunity of worship which prevailed universally among the polytheistic nations of antiquity, the Assyrians imported into their pantheon some of the gods of the neighbouring nations. Among the twelve gods of the Assyrians, enumerated in a long inscription at the same place, are Asshur, probably a deified hero, and Ishtar, who is, not without probability, supposed to be the personification of the moon.

The predominant religious element, in the character of the Assyrians, is seen in the designs traced upon their domestic utensils, engraved upon their seals and amulets, and sculptured on the walls of the palaces of their kings. Of the eleven devices of the impressions of seals found at Kouyunjik, seven appear to be connected with the mythology and religious worship of the country. Several of the bronze plates and dishes discovered at Nimroud are of similar character, and on some of them are represented deities of Egyptian origin, though evidently designed and executed by Assyrian artists. These remains of the mechanical ingenuity and artistic powers of the Assyrians, while they evince the extent to which the feeling of religion, mingled with the every-day concerns of life among them, are also valuable for the glimpses they afford us of their domestic economy. They were dug out of a chamber of the north-west palace at Nimroud, which Mr. Layard conjectures has been the repository of the royal arms and sacrificial vessels; but which Colonel Rawlinson (who discovered, in an adjoining chamber, an alabaster vase, which appeared to have contained preserved fruit) is of opinion was the royal kitchen. The walls were of common sun-dried bricks, such as are used throughout Asiatic Turkey and Persia for ordinary purposes at the present day, except about three feet from the floor, where large burnt bricks had been used. In one corner was a well, with a raised mouth of brickwork three feet high; it was filled up with rubbish, but on being emptied to the depth of sixty feet, brackish water was found. In clearing out the rubbish which filled up the chamber, two copper caldrons were found, about three feet deep, and two feet and a half in diameter; these were filled with a number of small bronze bells, several bronze plates, dishes, and cups, hundreds of ivory and mother-of-pearl buttons and studs, and various small articles in bronze and copper, the use of which is not very clear. The studs and buttons and some metal rosettes appear to have been used in the trappings of the Assyrian cavalry horses, and also of those attached to chariots.

Beneath the caldrons a number of bronze feet of lions and bulls were found, which probably had been the feet of tripods for supporting vases and bowls. Two other caldrons contained several plates and dishes, a wine-strainer of elegant form, and the handle of a vase, all of bronze. Of eight other caldrons and jars, some of which had been crushed flat by the falling in of the upper part of the building, one contained bones and ashes; the rest were empty. Behind the caldrons was a heap of bronze cups, bowls, and dishes, of various shapes and sizes, lying one above another, without order.

Some of the bronze vessels thus discovered are plain, but many are elaborately ornamented with figures of animals, etc., either embossed or engraved. About 150 of them are now in the British Museum. The metal of which they are composed has been found to contain one part of tin to ten of copper, which are the relative

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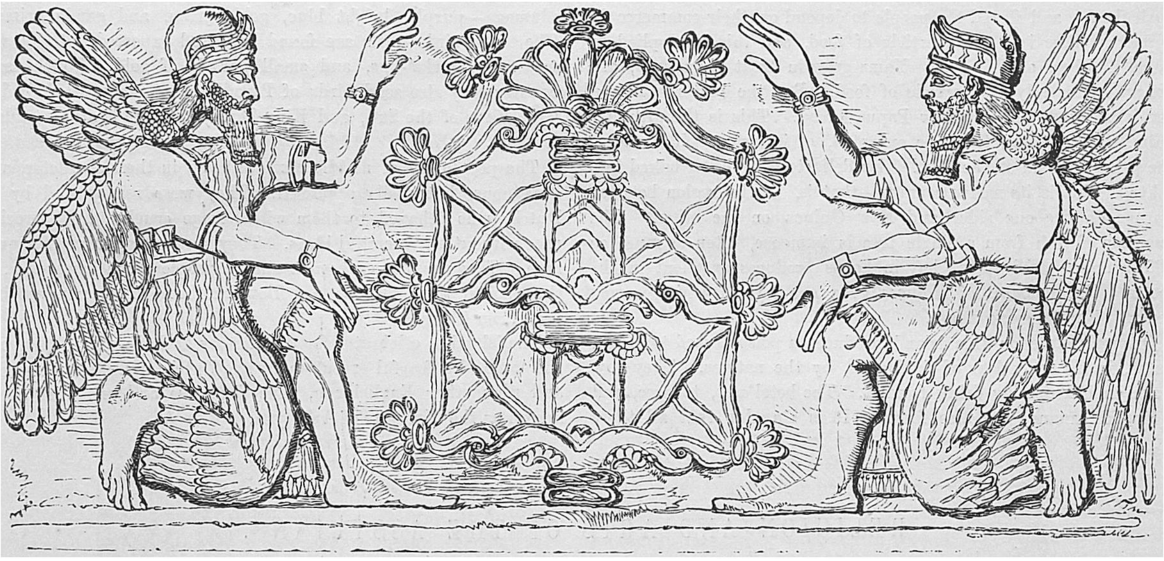
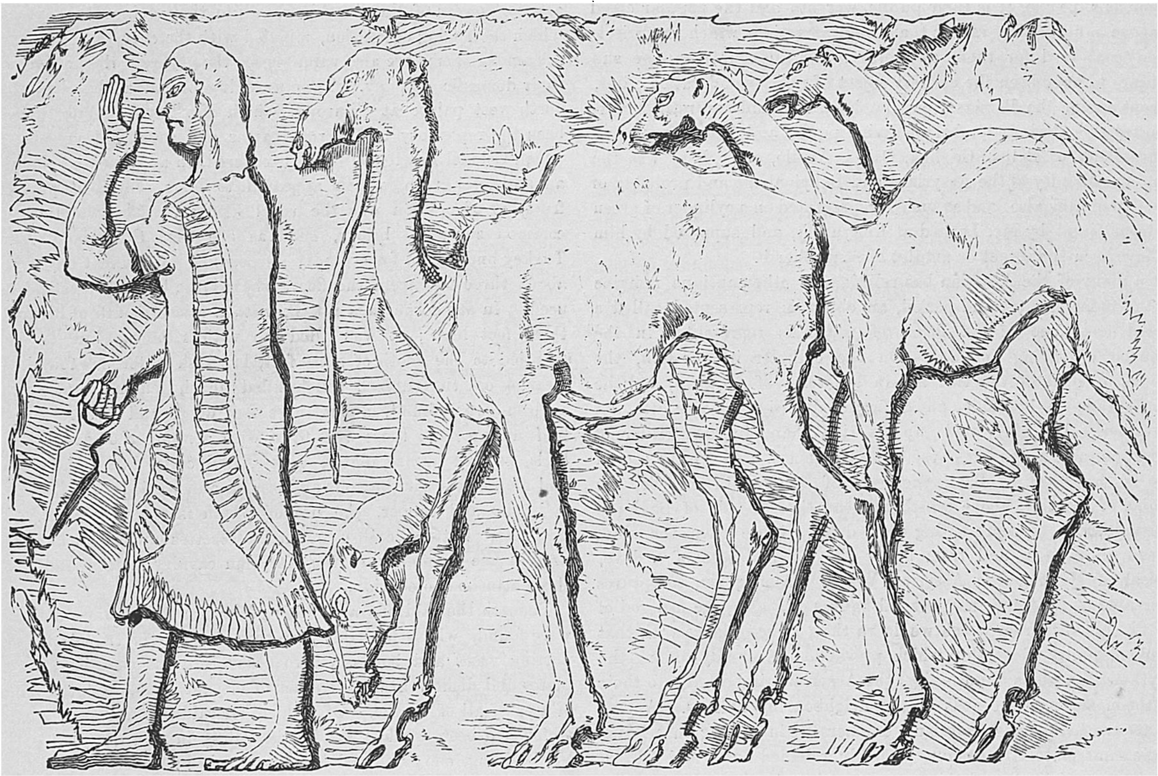
* The Illustrated Magazine of Art, vol. i. p. 206.



WINGED FIGURES BY A SACRED TREE.—FROM A BAS-RELIEF IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

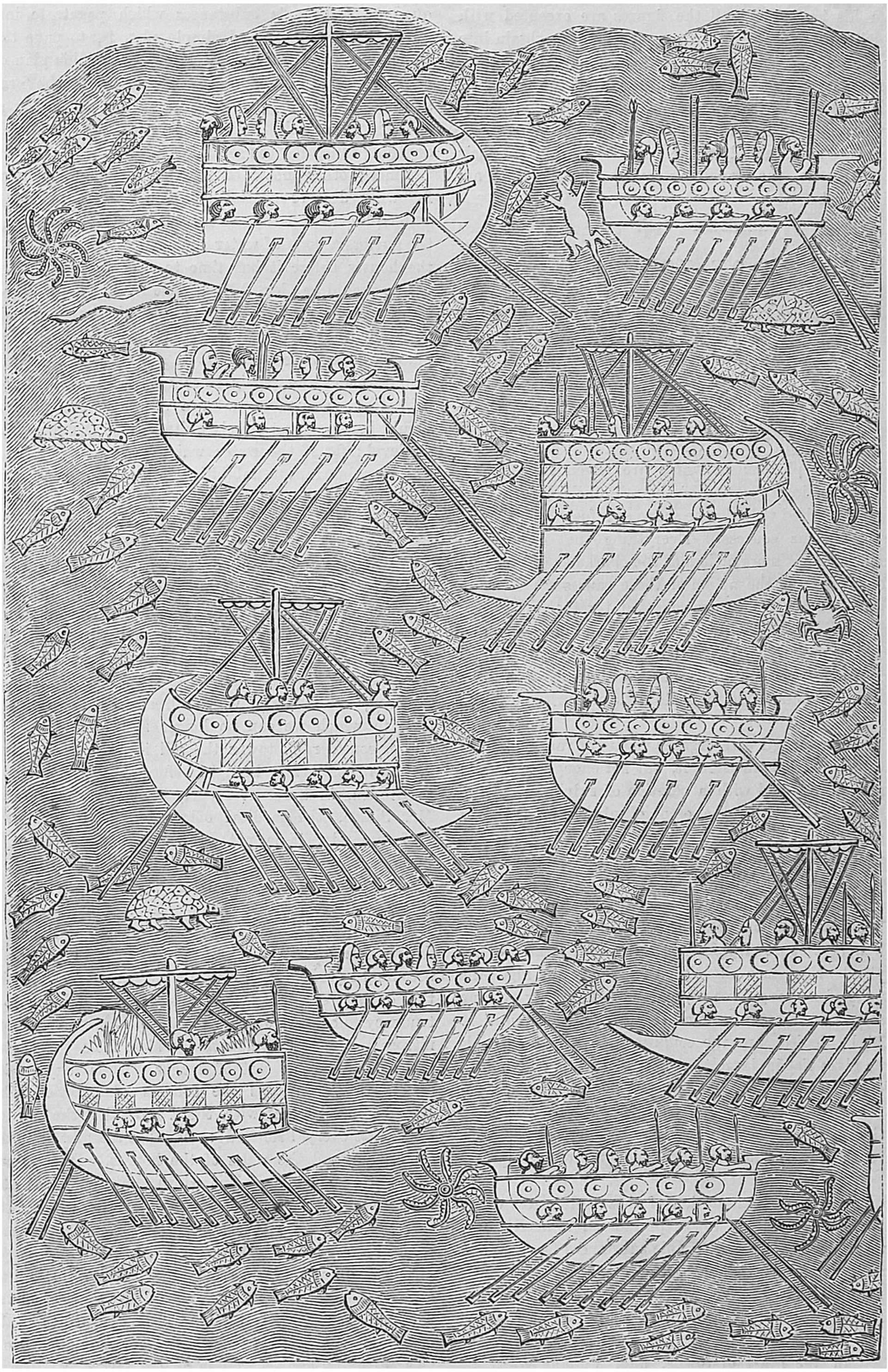


A WOMAN WITH CAMELS.—FROM A BAS-RELIEF IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

proportions used in the composition of bronze at the present day. The bells, however, have fourteen per cent. of tin, which shows that the Assyrians had made considerable advance in metallurgy, and understood the effect produced by increasing the proportion of that metal. By the decomposition of the metal, the effect of time and damp, the surface of these vessels was covered with a green coat of a crystalline nature, which has been removed since the vessels have been placed in the Museum. An alabaster jar, a lens of rock-crystal, and two glass bowls, were also found in this interesting apartment, showing that the Assyrians were not only acquainted with the manufacture of glass, but also with the properties of the burning-glass.

Some of the bas-reliefs from Kouyunjik, now in the British Museum, exhibit the progress which the Assyrians had made in ship-building. As their vessels were constructed only for the navigation of the Tigris, they were of small size, but in their lofty prows may be traced a considerable resemblance to the galleys of the ancient Greeks. In the accompanying engraving (p. 285) two kinds of vessels are represented—boats and ships with a single mast and yard—but both have a double bank of oars. The water appears to be well stocked with fish, which are swimming in every direction, while at the bottom, as we must suppose, the crab and the turtle crawl, and the star-fish agitates its arms in search of prey. A small kind of crocodile, and an animal of eel-like form, are also represented.

Another of these bas-reliefs portrays a battle in a marsh in Southern Mesopotamia, in which wicker-boats are used, precisely similar to those of the Afaij Arabs of the present day. In a similar scene, the Assyrians are bringing their captives ashore, one of the boats being towed by a man swimming on an inflated skin. The boats of the Arabs of the Afaij are thus described by Mr. Layard :—"They were of various sizes. In the bottom of some, eight or ten persons sat crouched on their hams ; in others, only one or two. Men standing at the head and stern, with long bamboo poles of great lightness, guided and impelled them. The largest were built of teakwood, but the others consisted simply of a very narrow framework of rushes covered with bitumen, resembling, probably, 'the vessels of bulrushes' mentioned by Isaiah (xviii. 2). They skimmed over the surface of the water with great rapidity. . . . This singular scene recalled vividly to my mind the sculptures at Kouyunjik representing the Assyrian wars in marshes of the same nature, and probably formed by the waters of the same river. The streets through the reeds, and the boats of rushes, are faithfully



THE ENEMIES OF THE ASSYRIANS ESCAPING IN THEIR SHIPS.—FROM A BAS-RELIEF IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

delineated in the bas-reliefs, showing how little the barbarous inhabitants of these great swamps have changed after the lapse of nearly three thousand years."

The bas-relief which has been reproduced in our second illustration represents a woman, barefooted, carrying some vessel in her hand, followed by four camels. The foremost of the animals has a halter depending from his head; and all the figures are executed with considerable fidelity and spirit. The glimpses which we obtain into the every-day life of the Assyrians by means of these bas-reliefs reveal customs and modes that have been perpetuated to the present day; but in all the higher arts the glory of the land has departed. Mounds of earth cover the palaces of Sennacherib and Sardanapalus, and where their banners flaunted in the sunlight as they led their thousands forth to battle, the traveller now beholds only the tents of the wandering Arabs.

HEALTH OF TOWNS.

THAT it is healthier to live in the country than in large towns, is a plain matter of fact which experience renders familiar to all. But it is only within a comparatively short period that any attempt has been made to investigate the causes of this effect; though without such an investigation it is obviously impossible to devise any means at all likely to be effectual in improving the health of towns. If we would arrive at an intelligent view of the subject, we must carefully consider the phenomena which are engendered in the course of years by the impregnation of the soil of cities with substances which are deposited there in the shape of refuse, or gradually accumulate from various sources. Everything that comes into contact with man partakes more or less of the character of clothing, and is similarly affected by the action of those causes which are in constant operation wherever men are collected together. Clothes, as we all know, require to be frequently washed and changed; and if we cannot cleanse and renew the soil upon which we tread, and the emanations from which are constantly rising about us, we ought at least to endeavour to maintain its natural purity as far as lies in our power.

Let the soil be impregnated with organic matter of various kinds; let it receive water enough to moisten it, but not enough to cleanse it; let this water be charged with a solution of sulphate of lime, which, by its combination with the organic substances buried in the soil, will give rise to the most mephitic and poisonous gases; let the ventilation which might have carried off these deleterious emanations be impeded; let light, which facilitates the slow combustion of organic substances, be prevented from often reaching the ground; and we have combined all the conditions necessary to render the soil a pest-house of infection, a dreadful swamp under the show of splendour, whence silently go forth day and night the treacherous agents of so many diseases, which are in reality nothing but the natural and necessary results of this concealed corruption. Such, it cannot be denied, are the conditions to which culpable neglect too often gives rise in large towns, even in this enlightened age. Much has been said of late years about the health of towns, and something has been done towards its promotion; but those whose personal observation has made them best acquainted with the subject, are the loudest in their demands for further improvement.

The usual causes of the accumulation of those substances which tend to render the soil of large towns prejudicial to health, are, the necessity we are under of using organic substances for food, and the various consequences of that use, the employment of these substances in manufactures, the domestic animals which live among us, and the human corpses which were formerly—and are sometimes even now, if the statements in the public press are to be believed—buried in the heart of towns, and, wasting away by decomposition, after a number of years form a large mass of putrid matter. In towns lighted by gas—that is to say, in all towns of any extent—there is an additional cause of infection, and one which, if not counteracted, may become, in time, productive of immense mischief. This is the development of vapours which, after being carried along with the gas in the pipes, issue through the escapes, and spread in the earth, giving it a fetid smell that betrays itself when there is any digging for repairs, make trees wither and perish by poisoning the roots, and taint the water in wells.

It is obvious from the above remarks, that the means of preventing the soil from getting into an unhealthy state must consist mainly in endeavouring to diminish, as much as possible, the quantity of organic substances which penetrate into the earth. The most customary and simple plan is, to pave the streets with stone. Independently of the advantages of this plan on the score of convenience for traffic, and the prevention of the formation of ruts and puddles, it evidently diminishes the permeable portion of the soil, since it is only through the interstices between the stones that anything can reach the earth beneath.

Among other means of accomplishing this important object, the following deserve special mention. There should be numerous water-plugs frequently, if not constantly, open, so as to pour into the gutters a body of water sufficient to carry off all the filth from the houses before it has time to sink into the soil. Sewers and drains should be plentifully laid down and kept thoroughly water-tight. To prevent the dispersion of the vapours and fluids engendered by the gas, some recommend that the gas-pipes should be placed inside the sewers. It is alleged that such an arrangement would render the repair of escapes more convenient, but on this point there is some room for a difference of opinion. Cemeteries should be placed not merely quite out of the town, but also below its level; for if the water which runs through the soil finds its way by subterranean imbibition to the soil of the town, it is evident that the evil, against which we are anxious to guard, will be secretly gaining ground. Every species of manufacture which gives out much organic matter ought to be removed to a distance from the town, or carried on close to a stream of water, powerful enough to carry off everything of this sort at once. Lastly, the strictest vigilance should be exercised over all gardens, markets, and other places where organic substances are likely to accumulate.

But, besides resorting to such preventive measures as the above, it is of the greatest importance to employ suitable means for counteracting the infection which already exists in the soil. It is a fact, to which we can no longer shut our eyes, that in almost all our considerable towns the soil is more or less infected. This fact was prominently brought before the public mind with regard to London, in a recent report, drawn up with great ability by Mr. Simon, the medical officer to the City Board of Health. Unfortunately, it is not so easy, in the present state of our knowledge, to discover a remedy for the evil as to state how it might have been avoided. In this, as in other cases, prevention is better than cure.

The first step should be to let the oxygen of the atmosphere have free circulation wherever there are organic materials capable of becoming injurious to health by decomposition. It is well known that oxygen, especially when aided by the influence of light, has a tendency to convert organic matter into water, carbonic acid, and nitrogen, by a slow combustion, which, from the moderation of its action, involves no sort of danger. Thus, oxygen is a powerful agent, which destroys the sources of infection whenever it is brought into contact with them. Besides, the air, by penetrating freely into every hole and corner, has a tendency to dry the earth, the streets, and the walls of the houses. Hence, not only ought the streets to be of sufficient width, but the yards at the back of the houses should be large enough to admit the fresh air to that side as well as the other, for if this is not the case the work of purification is only half done.

The next means to be employed consists in the use of wells, a means which has never yet received a fair trial, but which, with proper management, is capable of being turned to good account. A single experiment by a skilful engineer may suffice to demonstrate this. Having sunk a well in an old farm-yard, the soil of which had been long impregnated with the manure to a considerable depth, he could not get any water from the well at all fit to drink, though the water of another well, situated at a little distance above this, was excellent. However, by dint of working the well, and using the water from it for purposes of cultivation, he at last succeeded in completely changing its condition. The water gradually lost its colour and its smell, till in the course of a few years it